

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application, in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

This submission is in response to the Office Action dated February 24, 2005. Pending claims are 1-3 and 5-9. No new matter is added by the present response.

Claims 1-2 and 5-8 have been rejected as obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Koczab in view of newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,217,445 (to Young et al.). Specifically, the Examiner states that Koczab teaches all aspects of the claimed invention with the exception of binder in resin the acquisition zone. The Examiner is of the opinion that Young provides the missing teaching of an acquisition layer with thermoplastic polymers and binder resin. Therefore, according to the Examiner, it would have been obvious for one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to combine these references to arrive at the claimed invention.

The rejection is respectfully traversed, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that the claimed invention is not obvious over the cited art. As conceded by the Examiner, Koczab does not teach all aspects of the invention, but rather fails to teach the binder resin. Applicants submit that Koczab also fails to teach the density gradient, the containment layer, and the airlaid composition of the storage layer in the claimed invention. Applicants submit that reliance on Young does not provide the missing teachings of Koczab.

Young provides a teaching of binders and/or thermoplastic fibers in an acquisition layer. However, Young's teachings are limited to wetlaid structures. Young teaches that, "[w]et-laid structures wick body fluids much better than similar air-laid structures. This is because wet-laid structures suffer less wet collapse than do air-laid structures, even air-laid structures with stiffened cellulosic fibers. This, in turn, enables the wet-laid structures to maintain their capillary channels and void spaces better." 14:2-12. Applicants submit that there is no motivation to combine Young with Koczab. Young clearly teaches away from an airlaid product, whereas Koczab only teaches an airlaid product. Therefore, one skilled in the art would

